



Senate Bill 267 – Internet Gaming – Authorization and Implementation
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
February 15, 2023
TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION

Voices of Hope, Inc. is a nonprofit community-based organization that serves individuals with substance use disorders and addiction in Cecil and Harford Counties.

This letter is in opposition of SB267, which puts up for referendum the issuance of internet gaming licenses to video lottery operators in the State. This would authorize licensees to conduct casino-style gaming over the internet, allowing customers to receive the full casino experience from anywhere they please. Internet casinos can present a bevy of public health concerns. First, and most obvious, it allows customers to participate in casino games (e.g., poker, blackjack, roulette, etc.) on any device with internet connectivity. In Maryland, these games are only accessible at a brick-and-mortar casino. Having the offerings of a casino at one's fingertips can result in increased problem gambling behavior. Numerous international studies have found that internet casino gaming has a greater prevalence of problem gambling than brick-and-mortar casino gaming.¹ In an Australian study, the rate of problem gambling among non-internet gamblers was 0.9%, while the rate among internet casino gamblers was 2.7%.² A study of international gamblers as a whole found a similar relationship between internet gaming and problem gambling, with the prevalence rate of problem gambling being 17.1% amongst internet gamers and much lower 4.1% amongst non-internet gamers.³

There is currently not much research on the public health issues posed by internet casino gaming in the United States, as only six states currently allow online casinos.⁴ However, one of the first states to adopt legislation allowing internet gaming, New Jersey, has some alarming statistics. They prided themselves as leaders in the internet gaming industries, and thus emphasized the Responsible Gaming (RG) features that would accompany online casinos, such as the ability to set deposit and time limits, and the option to self-exclude.⁵ However, even with these RG measures in place, it was found that the use of these measures was very low, with only around 1% of all internet gaming account holders in the state accessing the most popular RG measure – the deposit limit.⁶ This emphasizes that the likely increase in problem gambling that could result from internet gaming cannot be curtailed by accompanying RG measures.

This bill is too much online gaming too soon in Maryland. We need to slow down and make sure that gambling addiction treatment and recovery supports are available for those impacted before growing access to more online internet gambling. **For these reasons, Voices of Hope, Inc. urges this committee to oppose SB 267.**

Thank you,

Jennifer Tuerke
Executive Director

1 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4610999/>

2 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4610999/>

3 <https://www.nj.gov/oag/ge/2015news/ResponsibleGamingFinalReport%202015.pdf>

4 <https://www.playusa.com/us/>

5 <https://www.nj.gov/oag/ge/2015news/ResponsibleGamingFinalReport%202015.pdf> 6

<https://www.nj.gov/oag/ge/2015news/ResponsibleGamingFinalReport%202015.pdf>